

**REMARKS**

Original claims 1- 41 have been cancelled.

New claims 42 - 54 have been added to the application.

New claim 42 includes the limitation of an abutment positioned adjacent a first end portion of a fastener element so that the fastener element includes a shoulder at both ends.

New independent claim 49 includes the limitation of a first end of a fastener element having an abutment so that the fastener element includes an abutment at the first end and a shoulder at a second end.

United States Patent No. 3,355,850 to Rohe fails to disclose a fastener element having an abutment/shoulder at both ends to separate two panel members. Rohe discloses collapsing a weakened wall section 34 of a fastener element A and bolting a frame member to the assembly to secure a sheet 10. This requires a honeycomb structure 12 to separate the sheets 10, 11, which is not required of the present inventive concept.

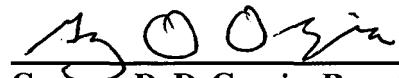
Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 42 and 49 overcome prior art references previously cited by the Examiner in parent Patent Application No. 06/647,607. Therefore, independent claims 42 and 49 are believed to be in a condition for allowance.

Dependent claims 43 - 48 include each and every limitation set forth in independent claim 42 and claims 50 - 54 include each and every limitation set forth in independent claim 49. Therefore, claims 43 -48 and 50 - 54 are also believed to be in a condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 08-2789 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayments regarding this Preliminary Amendment.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS, P.C.**

  
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**CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING**

I hereby certify that the enclosed **Preliminary Amendment** is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as Express Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope as "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee," Mailing Label No. **EV318930985US** and addressed to Mail Stop Patent Application, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 on **July 23, 2003**.

  
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**Tracy L. Smith**